

1 Corinthians 10 (Part 1): 1-12 • Where is Your Confidence?

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1 Corinthians chapter 10. If you're there, it says,

“For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” ⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.

⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed (which means, pay attention) lest he fall.” (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray.

Jesus, open our hearts to the ministry of Your Holy Spirit as You speak Your Word to us in this place. Lord we ask for Your grace. We ask for wisdom. We ask for understanding. We come to You, God, completely dependent on You. Apart from You, Lord, we cannot apprehend these truths, but with You and by Your power, we can not only lay hold of them, we can apply them to our lives. Be with us, we pray, in Jesus precious name we ask, amen.

Just because we're getting into a new chapter doesn't mean it's a new thought. Paul has not changed his thought direction here since chapter 8. He's still talking about the same stuff because it was a great need in the Corinthian church. Back

in chapter 8, he began to discuss the issue that was bugging people in the church at Corinth about some people who freely ate meat that had been sacrificed to pagan idols and they believed that it was okay. There was no big deal they thought, because who cares? An idol isn't anything.

But there were some people in the church of Corinth who thought it was a big deal and they said, no, that's wrong. And you and I don't deal with meat sacrifice to idols today, but there are lots of other things in the body of Christ for which some people feel the freedom and through their knowledge of God's Word. They have the freedom to be able to partake in certain things, whereas other Christians believe those things are fundamentally wrong to do.

What are you going to do when you're doing something that you feel the freedom in Christ to do because, and we're talking about things that aren't in the Word of God specifically. They're not laid out in the Scripture and they're what we call the gray areas. And you have a freedom to do that, and yet your brother or your sister says to you, that's wrong, Christians shouldn't do that.

Well, Paul discussed in chapter 8 how some Christians have the freedom, according to God's Word. Some of them don't have that freedom but it's incumbent upon those who do. Who have the liberty, to respond to their brother and sister in love, and that's the principle that Paul brought out in chapter 8.

It was essentially, yeah, knowledge is really, really cool, but just remember this knowledge puffs up, but love builds up and love is greater than knowledge. You got knowledge that says you can do something, you're free to do something, wonderful. But you also have love for your brother and sister in Christ who don't think what you're doing is right.

Paul went on to say in that chapter if my brother thinks that eating meat sacrificed idols is wrong, I'm not going to do it. I'll abstain for the sake of my brother. See, this is what the Corinthians weren't getting, and they weren't doing.

As he got into chapter 9, he continued that thought process by saying, hey sometimes, you have to give up your rights. Sometimes you have to surrender even the things you have a right to enjoy. Paul talked in that chapter how he did it himself. He made the point, I have the right to receive support from you financially, but I don't take that right. I don't take advantage of it. I lay it down so as not to hinder the Gospel.

He was basically saying to them, I'm doing this, so follow my example. You know, lay down, be willing to lay down your rights, and then at the end of chapter 9, you'll remember, he used the example of an athlete, those in competition. He said, hey, people who compete in the athletic games, they know that even though they've got a right to do something it is often best for them not to do that thing, whatever it is, if it's going to hinder their ability to compete and win the race.

He said to the Christians in Corinth, hey, run like you're running the race to win! Right? Be willing. If an athlete is willing to do it to win a little leafy crown on his head, and you have rewards coming that are eternal, shouldn't you be even more willing to lay things down on behalf of your brother and sister in Jesus, if they've got a problem with it? Well, that's a quick summary of 1 Corinthians chapters 8 and chapter 9, and now we get into chapter 10, and Paul is continuing this discussion, but now he's using an example of Israel.

And that's what he talks about when he says, our fathers. He's talking about, he's talking about the people who came before in the nation of Israel. And he's basically saying to them, and I'll summarize this quickly. Even though all of Israel came out of Egypt, when God set them free from their slavery there, not all of them made it into the promised land and that's being very kind actually.

Because of the adults who came out of Israel, and by the way, numbers range by scholars from two and a half to three and a half million people who came out of Egypt, right? Came out of, that Moses brought out of Egypt. Two and a half to three and a half million people, but of the adults who came into, or out of Egypt, how many went into the promised land? Two.

You see, he was being very kind when he said most of them didn't make it. The vast majority didn't make it, and one of the reasons why is because God wasn't pleased with them. The key verse to this is, look at verse 11 in your Bible. He says,

“Now these things happened (And he, after he got done talking about Israel and all the people who fell in the wilderness, he said, all these things happened) to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction...” (ESV)

If anybody ever asks you the question, why in the world should we study the Old Testament? You point them to this verse right here. All the things that happened in the Old Testament are written down as an example to you and I, so that we might understand and gain a heart of wisdom related to God's dealings with His people.

What is it Paul wants us to see here? Well, notice how he begins the passage. He talks about the fact that, he says, I don't want you to be unaware, that all of our fathers, all of the adults, two and a half to three and a half million adults, or people rather, who came out of Egypt, of those, most of them didn't enter. Most of them didn't get in, although they saw all those amazing things, and he mentioned several things that they saw.

Look what he says. He says, I want you to know, when they came out of Egypt, they were all under the cloud. He says, they all passed through the sea. He says, they were all baptized into Moses, and they all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. What do those things mean? Well see, they're types. In fact, when Paul says all these things happened as examples, that word in the Greek can actually be translated type. It was a type of something or a foreshadowing of something that is to come.

And basically, he's saying, and this is the New Testament connection to this, in case you wondered if this was even applicable to you as a Christian. He says, all the people passed through the cloud. Well, that's a type of being in the presence and under the direction of the Holy Spirit. They all were under the direction of the Holy Spirit when they came out of Egypt.

You know that don't you? And even as Christians, we've been under the direction of the Holy Spirit as the body of Christ. Just this morning, the Lord graced us with a word of exhortation during worship, and as Dawn got up and shared that word, that was something she felt the Holy Spirit wanted her to share with you guys, and all of us, as an exhortation to lay your burdens upon the Lord, and so on.

Well, it's a wonderful thing to happen, isn't it? It's a glorious thing to happen, and you all got to experience it. You were here in the room when God moved, through His Spirit, to bring that kind of a message. Here's the point Paul's making. Hey, so what? The Jews were all there too. They were all under the cloud, and yet most of them fell. Look what he goes on to say. He says, "*they all passed through the sea.*" That's a type of water baptism.

I talked to, we're going to deal with this in our baptism class on Thursday when I meet with those people, and I'm going to tell them this, that I'm going to now say to you. Baptism doesn't save you, because that's not... But you'd be shocked how many people are trusting in the fact that they've been baptized. You're going to heaven? Yeah. How do you know? Been baptized. Right?

And Paul says, hey, you know what? All the Jews who came out of Egypt, they all passed through the sea. He's talking about the Red Sea, but it was a type, it was a picture of water baptism, and yet, all but two of the adults fell in the wilderness. He goes on to say, they were all baptized into Moses. That's a picture of being baptized into Christ, right? Because Moses is that temporary picture of the deliverer who saves us out of our slavery, right?

Jesus saved us out of the slavery to sin. Moses saved them out of their slavery to Egypt. Egypt is a picture of sin as well. He says, hey, they were all baptized into Moses. They were all immersed into the leadership role that Moses presented for them, and yet what happened to all but two of the adults? They fell, they fell in the wilderness, never made it into the promised land.

You see what Paul is getting at? He says, they all ate the same spiritual food, they all drank the same spiritual drink. He's referring specifically to the fact that they had manna that was provided for them on the ground by the Lord, and when they were thirsty, God provided water. On more than one occasion, water came gushing out of a rock. Paul even says right here that rock is Christ that's Jesus who brings forth living water.

But he says, they ate the manna. They drank that miraculous water that came out of a rock. Water doesn't come out of a rock. That was God supernaturally providing for the people of Israel and they consumed it, and yet all but two of them fell in the wilderness.

Do you get what Paul is saying? Just because you've experienced these things, these outward things, doesn't mean you're living a life that is pleasing to God necessarily.

And by inference, we learned that the Corinthians were dealing with just that sort of a mindset where, because they were Christians, because they did this, because they did that, and they'd experienced this, and they'd experienced that, still they weren't living their lives the way they needed to.

And if you look with me in verse 5, this is where Paul reminds them.

“Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not pleased.”

You see, right about the time that we start thinking that everything that we do is the ultimate proof that we're living our lives the way we're supposed to, God comes along and goes, oh, no. Yeah, Israel did all those things too. When I'm talking to somebody and I'm asking them about their life or whatever. How do

you know? How do you know you're really living for the Lord like the way you should?

And they say things to me like, well, Going to church, read my Bible, pray, try to pray regularly, and trying to live a good life. You know what goes off in my head? Red alert. I mean, that sounds like some of the worst things anybody could say, because it is based on what they can do or what they've experienced. It's all this external stuff.

I'm trying to do this. I've been going to church pastor I'm trying to, I'm praying, I'm trying to read the Word, and those things are all good things, but those can be very external to your life, and Paul is saying to the Corinthians, hey listen guys, if you're thinking that you're standing in Christ is because you're doing all these things or you've experienced all these things then think again lest you fall.

Because listen, Israel experienced all those things too, man, they saw miracles. I've got to tell you something. I've never seen a big, huge body of water ocean up and or open up and have people walk through it on dry ground like to see that. I mean, I've seen it on movies and they did a pretty good job with special effects, but I'd sure love to see it in person. Those people got to see it in person. They saw the Egyptian army held back with a cloud of fire while all the people passed through the Red Sea seeing a wall of water on both sides of them.

What a trip that must have been when they saw that happen. They got to the other side, and they saw the Egyptian army then begin to take off into the midst of the Red Sea and they saw the waters return back to the way they were originally, and they saw the entire army of Egypt destroyed. They saw that with their eyes. Every day, there was a pillar of cloud that guided them. Every night, they could look out their tent, and there was a pillar of fire that was guiding and protecting them.

Every morning, they woke up and went and got their cornflakes off the ground. It was called manna, which basically is Hebrew for what is it? That's literally what it means, but every day they got to experience those things. Every day. And yet, guess what? Of the adults, two people made it in. Out of somewhere between two and a half and three and a half million people. Yeah. Wow. Right?

So, you see, here's the point that Paul is saying: if you think you're doing good because you've experienced all these things and you've seen God do these wonders and miraculous things, think again, be paying attention lest you fall.

There are a lot of warnings in the Bible about not just relying upon an outward sort of an expression of your Christianity rather than truly letting the Lord challenge and change your heart. Let me show you a passage. This is from 1 John chapter 1. And he writes, he says,

1 John 1:5-6 (ESV)

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (Now he says) If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

And yes, this is written to Christians who are born again, okay? Is it possible for a Christian to say one thing and be living another thing? Absolutely, or John wouldn't have said it. He says, listen, be careful here, because you need to understand in God, there's no darkness, but there can be in you, very easily. But you and I might go around saying, and he's talking about that outward thing. We say, I have fellowship with God.

I enjoy fellowship, but he says, but inside, if there's darkness in us, which he's referring to any myriad of expressions of darkness, sin and hatred toward our brother and or just anger and bitterness or just something dark. If we're just nurturing it and allowing it to live inside of us, he says, you're living a lie. He says, be careful and don't comfort yourself that all these things have happened outwardly. It's the heart that is the real question here. It's the real issue.

In fact, look what John goes on to say here in chapter 2. He says,

1 John 2:6 (ESV)

“...whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

“...whoever says (and that's the outward expression) that he is abiding in Christ really ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

And that's John hitting it on the head, isn't it? He says hey stop talking and start walking because it's so easy, have you learned that when you ask people if they're a Christian that it means like nothing? I've stopped asking that question,

are you a Christian? If they say yes, that doesn't mean anything anymore. What I've now begun to ask people is, are you walking with Jesus day by day? That's the question, because see that's what really tells what's going on. I don't care about all your outward things.

I don't care if you've been baptized in water. I don't care if you've experienced this. I don't care if you've taken communion. I don't care if you've done these outward things, what I want to know is, are you walking with Jesus today? Right? That's the question.

That's what Paul is saying. Lest you become propped up, artificially, by comforting yourself by saying, well, I've done this, or I've been there. I got dunked back in 1996, they dunked me in water. Praise the Lord and we're putting all of our focus on these outward things.

The question is, are you walking with Jesus? I'm not suggesting that you're not saved. I'm not, Paul's not suggesting that you're not saved. He's saying, God still may not be pleased with your life just because you've done these outward things, okay? Lest you fall along the way and not finish, because remember in the last chapter, he was talking about finishing the race.

He says, run like you're really running to win, to finish because remember this, the vast majority of the Jews who started the race from Egypt to the promised land didn't even get there.

And by the way, the promised land is not a picture of heaven, regardless of what you may have heard. The promised land, Israel, is a picture of walking in the promises of God. Some people never get there. They get saved, they go through this period of wilderness wandering, and they never ever enter into the promises of God, because they fall along the way. They were putting their hope in something other than what God needed to do in the heart, so there's a warning.

He goes, look at verse 7. He continues the warning. He says, *“Don't be idolaters as some of them were...”*

You might think, well, does idolatry even exist today? I mean, if somebody asked you that, if somebody came right up to you and said, are you an idolater? What would you say? Most people say, well, I don't have one of those little dumb little dolls in my house that you bow down to and burn incense to, or sacrifice cats, or something like that. I don't do any of that stuff, that's old, ancient stuff. Hey, listen, let me show you an interesting definition of idolatry.

Sure. The first definition, I looked this up on the internet and you know the internet doesn't lie.

DEFINE: IDOLATRY (i-dol-a-try)

1. worship of idols
2. extreme admiration, love, or reverence for something or someone

The first definition is, yeah, it is a worship of idols. But idolatry is also defined as an extreme admiration, love, or reverence for something or someone.

And Paul is saying here, yeah, you're Christians, praise the Lord, but has your heart been stolen by something or someone to the degree that, God has taken a back seat? Because you know what? That's idolatry. That's modern-day idolatry.

If somebody ever said to you, hey, are you ever messed around with idolatry? You can say, oh, yeah. Been there, done that. Because I have, haven't you? Hasn't something stolen your attention, stolen your heart, even temporarily, from your love of God? Something?

I mean, it's happened to all of us, hasn't it? Well, we've got to recognize that can and does happen sometimes in our lives and not be stumbled by it to the point where we fall and don't get back up.

What else could be an idolatrous love of our lives? Well, money, pleasure, thrill seeking that adrenaline rush. Yeah, that can literally... Listen, whatever you're living for, whatever gets you up in the morning could very easily be your God. Whatever gets you out of bed, whatever you spend your money on, whatever your time and attention is focused on could very easily be your God, and what Paul is warning you and I is, hey, let's be careful not to get into idolatry, as they did.

That was one of the things, they loved pleasure so much. It says they sat down to eat and they got up to play. Did you notice that? And that word for play carries the connotation of sexual immorality and the love of pleasure. And that's actually what he goes on to say.

He says, let's not any of us be caught by sexual immorality. Is there any chance of that happening today? Are you kidding? I mean, sexual immorality is in that all-time high category in our culture, so how many Christians does it pick off?

Lots of them. Lots of them fall to it. It's a very easy thing to fall to. By the number of people that I even talk to, or hear about, who are addicted to pornography or any number of other expressions of sexual immorality. Living together outside of marriage, and I'm talking Christians here now. We know that sexual immorality has made a very heavy mark on the body of Christ. Very heavy mark to the point where we stopped even caring.

A lot of times we decided when it comes to like couples living together, we just don't even, we don't even care. It just, it's so just prevalent today. We stopped even looking at it as a sin. They're not married. They're living together, having sex. Big deal. Isn't everybody doing it? Yeah. That's called sexual immorality.

Paul says, be careful. Look what he goes on to say in verse 9. He says,

“We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents,¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.”

Israel was really good at grumbling and complaining. I'm so glad that we don't have a problem with that today. In the body of Christ, we never, ever, complain or mumble. Look at this from Philippians chapter 2, Paul writes,

Philippians 2:14 (ESV)

Do all things without grumbling or disputing,

Do all things without grumbling or disputing,” (which is arguing, complaining, stuff like that.)

Because why? It can take you down. It can take you down. It took a lot of very good people down. We read through the Old Testament, you read through the Book of Exodus, all those people who died, and we think, well boy, they sure were dopes. Couldn't even walk with God. You know what I mean? They were getting manna on their doorstep every single morning, and they saw miracle, after miracle, and still they complained and grumbled. And told Moses that they thought he was an idiot, and how come you're doing to bring us out to the desert to die? We were better off in Egypt.

And we just read those things and go, oh those people, and we're just like them. Just like them. Paul says, be careful. Be careful if you think you stand, if you think you're standing, lest you fall, because it is very, very easy to do that.

Again, like I said earlier, when I asked somebody how they know they're living for the Lord, living a life pleasing to Him, and they say to me things like I said before, yeah, going to church, reading my Bible, praying, trying to live that good life. I think to myself, man, you have this enormous target on your back and the enemy is going to lay you flat, because that sort of a statement shows just how far that person really is from Christ.

When you walk with Jesus, when you genuinely walk with Jesus and you learn about His grace. You eventually come to the place of learning that I can't please Him by what I do. The only way that I'm going to ever please God is by putting my faith in Him because without faith, it is impossible to please God.

And the only way I'm going to walk uprightly with God, and the only way I'm going to minimize that target on my back for the enemy to hit, and maybe you've wondered, maybe you've even thought that you have a big target on your back. Maybe you think that the enemy can just go at you whenever, wherever you are.

Let me tell you how to minimize that target on your life. Get down on your knees and confess to God with all your heart. I can't do this. I can't please you. I can't walk with you. I cannot do this Christian thing, whatever it is you're asking of me, I can't do it.

And now I come to You, and I confess to You, Lord, that is only by Your power and by Your Spirit that I will ever be able to walk this Christian life, and I need to rely on You every single day.

There was a song that was written a long time ago and I remember just because I was working back, and I was in Christian radio at the time working as a disc jockey. Michael Card wrote it, Amy Grant recorded it, made it semi popular, but it was a song called, I Have Decided. Anybody remember that?

“I have decided to live like a believer. Turn my back on the deceiver. I'm going to live what I believe. Then he goes on to say, I have decided that being good is just a fable. I just can't because I'm not able. I'm going to leave it to the Lord.”

Michael Card is a smart cookie. I met him once. I got to interview him on the radio. But let me tell you something, he learned something and put it into lyrics that a lot of Christians have yet to learn.

I've decided I'm going to live for Jesus, but I've decided that being good is just a fable and I can't do it. And these people that say, I'm just trying to live a good

Christian life, I think to myself, oh boy, let me move out of the way, because something's coming in your life.

What we need to be saying is, Lord, I need You every hour. I need You every minute of every hour. We need to humble ourselves and say, God, I can't do this only through Your power, only through Your Spirit, only through You keeping me and I going to be able to live this Christian life.

Somehow, somehow, we Christians got messed up, and even though we believe that we're saved by grace, we somehow think we're kept by works. It's just really weird. You ask people, how's a person saved? And they usually will answer, you're right. They'll say, well, we're saved by trusting in what Jesus did on the cross, and believing that's all that can be done. There's nothing I can do to add to what He did on the cross, so I'm saved by putting my faith in Jesus's finished work on the cross.

Is that a good answer? I like that answer, and then you come back and say are you trying to live that Christian life? And they go, well, I'm trying. We're trying hard. Just trying to live the, trying to live it, please, God. I'm just trying to live for Him. I'm just trying. And they'll say to me, Pastor, I'm trying hard. I'm praying hard. I'm just trying to walk. Oh, God, I'm just trying. And I'm just like, Ugh! You're going to give yourself a rupture somewhere. You just be, what's going on?

They're trying in their own power and strength to walk this Christian life and they can't do it. And somehow we got this idea, that's how you be a Christian. We're saved by grace, kept by our devotion, and if I can just be strong enough and grit my teeth and live it out, I'm going to be a Christian if it's the last thing I do. I'm going to be a Christian if it kills me, it will, let me tell you right now, it'll kill you.

Best thing you can do, Jesus, I need You, and I can't do this without You. I will fail every time I try to live this life that you've called me to live. I can't do it. Jesus, You can do it in me, through me. I'm going to trust in You, just as I trusted You to save me from my sin. I'm going to trust you to give me the ability to live this Christian life.

It's by faith, you guys. That's why the Bible says, it is from faith to faith, or from first to last. It's faith, faith, faith, all the way through. Works don't enter in except for the issue of rewards, but when it comes to your salvation and walking with Jesus, it's all about faith. Don't you feel lighter already? It's just, let me tell you something.

It's incredibly therapeutic to say to Him, I can't do this. And you know what? He's not sitting up there going, oh, you what? He's going, I knew that all along. Glad you finally dialed that one in.

Because you know what? We start to learn that same thing Paul found out. His power is made perfect in my weakness. Oh, that's right. It's when I humble myself. Say, Jesus, I can't, but You can, that's when it's going to start to happen. But it's getting to that point of humbling ourselves and saying, I can't, that's the tough part.